



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Ms Eleni Evangel, MLA
(Member for Perth)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply

Tuesday, 16 April 2013

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Motion

MS E. EVANGEL (Perth) [5.30 pm]: Mr Speaker, please accept my sincerest congratulations on your election to position of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. As a newly elected member, I respectfully look forward to your guidance in this place. I congratulate all fellow elected members, new and old, and thank our Premier, Hon Colin Barnett, for his advice and encouragement throughout the election period. To our parliamentary officers and staff, your assistance has helped make my transition to this place a pleasant one, and for this I thank you.

I stand here before you as the first Liberal Party member for Perth in 45 years—an electorate in which I both live and work. I take this opportunity to pay respect to the last Liberal to hold this seat, the late senator, Hon Peter Durack, who represented the seat of Perth between 1965 and 1968. By all accounts, Hon Mr Peter Durack was a man of great ability and integrity. He went on to represent Western Australia in the Senate from 1970 to 1993 and served as Australia's Attorney-General from 1977 to 1982.

If he could see our Perth city now, I am sure he would agree she has grown; she has changed. She is transitioning into a world-class city of distinction and significance. What may perhaps have been but passing thoughts, dreams or visions for our city's future in the mid to late 1960s are now becoming a reality.

As for our wider Perth electorate, it has more than doubled in size and now includes the suburbs of East Perth, West Perth, Northbridge, Highgate, North Perth, Leederville, Mt Hawthorn, and pockets of Mt Lawley and Coolbinia. What has remained—in fact I could confidently say has been enhanced over the years—is the rich blend of cultural diversity evident in all aspects of the Perth electorate lifestyle. We are home to constituents from many varied and diverse cultural backgrounds from all continents of the world. It is this cosmopolitan mix that defines our community, and our café and restaurant culture. It is celebrated via the many cultural, food and music festivals held annually throughout the electorate.

To appreciate the value of this diversity, we need only look at Northbridge, Leederville and Mt Hawthorn, home to the numerous cultural groups and associations that have been embedded in our community's social fabric for close to—or over, in some instances—100 years.

I am proud to say that my longstanding involvement with many of these groups has been extremely rewarding.

Mr Speaker, I have had the privilege of working with you as a fellow City of Perth councillor, but for those amongst us who do not know me, I wish to indulge in some personal and professional history. My academic and professional backgrounds are in education and media. I proudly lay claim to being one of the foundation teachers at St Andrew's Grammar. Many amongst us are friends of St Andrew's, which is a private independent college successfully operated under the auspices of the Hellenic community of Western Australia. Additionally, I have enjoyed a career in the media industry, presenting and producing lifestyle programs and independent documentaries.

I have a long and multi-dimensional affiliation with the Perth electorate I now represent in this place. At the time of my birth, my newly migrated Greek parents, Tasso and Julia Parissis, were living in Brisbane Street. My mother and late father—who, if he were alive, would be celebrating his eighty-fifth birthday today—like so many others before and after them, sought refuge in this great country from poverty and helplessness, a result of years of world and civil wars in their native homeland, Greece.

They arrived in Australia in the early 1960s with empty pockets and little knowledge of the English language. My parents—represented by my mother, Julia, here tonight—were people of great integrity, honesty and work ethics of distinction; not uncommon to the many new Australians I have been privileged to meet. I have much to thank my parents for—primarily, for a loving, secure childhood for my brother, my sister and myself. They instilled in us a pride and appreciation of our Greek heritage, taught us their native language and raised us according to their Orthodox faith. However, we were always reminded that first and foremost we are Australian, and it is with this great country our loyalty resides. I thank my parents for being brave enough to leave their family and homeland at such a young, innocent age, in search of a brighter future in this great country, with all the opportunities it presents.

My Greek background I share with my husband, Bill, a legal practitioner in the city centre for over 25 years, and together we have enjoyed sharing these traditions with our three beautiful children: Andria, a second-year nursing student; Christos, a law student; and Juliet, who is currently studying marketing and business.

Both Bill and I have close affiliations with the Hellenic community of Western Australia, having served on numerous committees and associations over the years, and it is with pride that I acknowledge the strong Hellenic presence throughout my Perth electorate. This includes the cathedrals of St Constantine and Hellene, and Evangelismos; the Hellenic community centre, the Hellenic club, the Hellenic Women's Association, the Floreat Athena Soccer Club, St Basil's welfare; and Castellorizian House.

Many Greek Australians have made extraordinary contributions to Western Australia in business, academia, medicine and community service. I proudly recognise our former Western Australian Governor, Dr Ken Michael, and his wife, Julie, as outstanding Western Australian citizens of Greek background. Their exceptional service to our state was recently recognised by the Greek government, with the bestowment of its highest honour upon them, the Order of the Phoenix.

I have often heard our former Governor speak fondly of his early childhood years, growing up in Northbridge, just one street away from his lovely wife, Julie. Such fond childhood memories I too share. In the mid to late 1960s, my father, Tassos, was a partner in one of the first nightclubs in Northbridge, the Top Hat Cabaret, and in the early 1970s became famous for his kebabs when he opened the Plaka Coffee House in James Street, Northbridge.

It is during this time of childhood and teenage years that I have my fondest memories of our city and Northbridge as a colourful, exciting family-friendly environment. It was Perth's epicentre of culinary delights and entertainment hub. Such memories as these inspired me to seek election as a City of Perth councillor and commit eight years to supporting the rejuvenation of Northbridge and our city centre.

It was somewhere between my teenage years and role as a councillor that my childhood playground suffered a loss of identity, when its value and community standing was questioned and when it lost its family and social appeal. I applaud the strength and endurance of the businesses and communities in withstanding years of commercial and retail difficulties through a lack of attention and investment by successive governments in city infrastructure.

What in fact occurred was described by highly acclaimed local academic and historian, Professor Jenny Gregory as the “doughnut city phenomena”. The concentration of public moneys was focused on an expanding city and our northern–southern corridor extensions, whilst our city centre experienced many years of urban infrastructure drought.

Community involvement has always been a passion of mine, and I discovered early in my adult life that the more you put into your community, the more you can indeed achieve, and I found it was a process I thoroughly enjoyed. Frustrated by the lack of government investment in our city’s urban renewal, I decided that as an armchair critic there was little I could do, so in 2005 I successfully stood as a councillor for the City of Perth, and was then re-elected in 2009. My focus was to lobby for and support much-needed major projects such as the sinking of the railway line, the cultural centre and Northbridge renewal, the waterfront and riverside projects, and a new Museum in the heart of our city’s cultural centre.

In the fragile global economic market in which we exist, it is imperative we invest in cultural and urban environments with all the creative, educational, entertainment, professional, residential, recreational and retail opportunities they present, thus remaining competitive in attracting interstate and international tourists, and overseas students—all major contributors to the Western Australian economy.

I have long advocated that a dollar spent in our city is a dollar spent on all Western Australians. Whether it is Forrestfield, Wanneroo or Geraldton one calls home, we all have an opinion on, and lay claim to, our state’s city centre. An investment in our city is an investment for all Western Australians.

The 2008 election of the Barnett government marked the beginning of unprecedented investment in major city projects, and the recent re-election of this government is a strong mandate for projects currently under construction and those that will transform Perth into a dynamic, sustainable city. I am thankful to my party for acknowledging the unique significance of our city, and congratulate the Premier and the Minister for Planning, Hon John Day, for their strength and commitment to bold city projects such as Elizabeth Quay and the Northbridge Link. Delivered by the state government and supported by the City of Perth, these projects will revitalise Perth and provide exciting destinations for locals, tourists, city workers and visitors. I am delighted with our government’s decision to build a new Museum in our city’s cultural heartland, and would like to read a comment by Neil MacGregor, director of the British Museum, who I believe says it all. Mr MacGregor stated —

The decision by the Western Australian Government to invest in a new State Museum in Perth is great news not just for Australia, but for the world.

Not only is Perth one of the great cities of the Indian Ocean: Western Australia contains some of the oldest evidence of life on Earth, one of the World’s oldest settled indigenous civilizations, a richly diverse and rapidly diversifying population and one of the most bio-diverse places on the planet. What a basis for an incredible new museum!

I wholeheartedly welcome this news and anticipate its delivery.

It was a privilege being a City of Perth councillor, and it was a rewarding role for many reasons, but it was particularly the grassroots relationships I formed that I value most. I chose to serve on many external boards and committees because the fact is, working with the community and seeing the results of a collective effort is what democratic governance is all about. I would like to acknowledge some of the boards and committees on which I have served as either chairperson or committee member. My congratulations to all the members for their outstanding contributions and service to the Perth City Liquor Accord, the Business Improvement Group of Northbridge, the Perth City Link Steering Committee, the Perth Fashion Festival Advisory

Board, Tamala Park Regional Council, East Perth Community Safety Group, the Sir Charles Court Memorial Statue Committee, and the Perth City Focus group, to name but a few.

Through my role as chair of the Perth City Liquor Accord, I have been privileged to work with the many organisations involved with the responsible service of alcohol, represented by the WA Nightclub Association, the Australian Hotels Association, WA Police, the liquor enforcement unit, the Business Improvement Group of Northbridge and the City of Perth, and we collectively addressed many alcohol-related issues facing our community. I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of all the mentioned groups and their commitment to keeping our entertainment precincts safe and enjoyable environments. Additionally, I thank our police minister, Hon Liza Harvey, for her ongoing interest in, and support of, programs such as the recently launched Ambassador program—an initiative designed to enhance patrons' experience in Northbridge.

For six of my eight years as a City of Perth councillor I chaired the Marketing, Sponsorship and International Relations Committee, and in doing so developed a strong appreciation and admiration for our state's major arts and cultural organisations such as Artrage, the Perth International Arts Festival, Awesome Arts, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Blue Room Theatre, the Black Swan State Theatre Company, and many more.

Western Australia is a creative and talented state. I am a strong believer in and supporter of the arts and, in particular, our local organisations. The benefits they present to our community are immeasurable. How can one place a dollar value on vibrancy, excitement, liveability and, most importantly in my opinion—opportunity? By this I mean the opportunity for artists to gain real-life experience in their chosen fields. The creative industries can be cutthroat to break into and the more we, as a state, recognise and invest in these industries and organisations, the more opportunity we provide for our homegrown talent to excel in their chosen fields.

The Perth electorate is unique in so many ways. It is this uniqueness that I find so appealing and fascinating. We are a smorgasbord of people from all walks of life—retired empty nesters, international or local students, young urban professionals, new Australians and elderly people, to name a few. In campaigning for the seat of Perth, much of my time was spent doorknocking and attending community events. I held community forums in various parts of the electorate. I really enjoyed meeting and speaking to people, both older and younger residents.

A tremendous number of people have made the transition to inner city living in East Perth, West Perth and Highgate, and the suburbs of North Perth, Mount Hawthorn and Leederville are awash with young families. It is a common sight to see children riding their bikes or playing in the local parks. With the growing number of young families in the electorate, we see additional pressure placed on our local schools. I have had the pleasure of visiting Mount Hawthorn, North Perth, Kyilla and Highgate Primary Schools and I applaud the outstanding work of the principals, teachers and parents. I place school upgrades in the Perth electorate as one of my primary priorities and look forward to working closely with our Minister for Education, Hon Peter Collier, and our local school communities.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms E. EVANGEL: Additionally, the Perth electorate boasts many varied and diverse sporting clubs. They are an integral part of our community-based recreational lifestyle and double as hubs of social activity. Our bowling, tennis, soccer and football clubs and leisure centres play significant roles in our community. Improved bicycle networks and safety and network connectivity is a priority and I am pleased with this government's \$30 million commitment to improved bicycle networks. I encourage the development of end-of-journey facilities.

I applaud the City of Vincent for initiating the recent redevelopment of the iconic Beatty Park Leisure Centre, and the state government through the Department of Sport and Recreation for its

support of this outstanding community facility. The recently completed \$17 million upgrade is stunning and provides a plethora of sport and leisure opportunities.

I am also delighted with this government's \$95.14 million redevelopment of nib Stadium, which consists of a redeveloped covered eastern grandstand, complete with new food, beverage and toilet facilities; a 25-seat barbecue terrace; and open corporate boxes with seating for about 420. I congratulate the Premier and our Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hon Terry Waldron, for this important commitment.

At this stage I would like to say how honoured I am to be the member for Perth and the electorate's representative. Seeking election to public office can be a daunting experience. I must say that it certainly was for me, but it was also an enjoyable experience. Who would have guessed that a cup of coffee with my long-time friend Fay Duda at Bocelli's Espresso in Forrest Place would see me standing here as the member for Perth, addressing you all tonight? Fay, you never doubted and you always believed. For your support as my friend and the work that you do as the president of Perth division, I sincerely thank you.

The campaign journey is one I will value for a lifetime. It was a unique opportunity to bring extended family together, reconnect with old friends, and make wonderful new ones—young and old. What amazes me is the passion, faith and dedication of all involved. To my patron, Senator Mathias Cormann; my duty MLC, Hon Liz Behjat; Hon Michael Mischin; Deputy Premier, Hon Dr Kim Hames; former Senator Hon Chris Ellison and former federal member for Perth Mr Ross McLean, who is here tonight, I thank you all for your support.

A special acknowledgement to my campaign chair, Peter Dyett, who devoted his time and energy, thank you for your commitment—and congratulations on your marriage to your lovely wife, Arti, just a day after the election. And I thank my amazing team—Lily Chen, Bill Evangel, Margaret Anne Manifis, George Georgiou, Cathy Del Carlo, Keith Yong, Christopher Stafford, Norman Haywood, Jeremy Chitty and the late Albert Di Lallo, who, sadly, passed away just one week prior to the election.

“Albert the Great”, as he was fondly known, was an inspirational Western Australian of Italian descent and will be remembered by many for his generosity, hard work and contribution to business and the community. The founding father of the Midland Military Markets and, more recently, the Salon Express franchise, Albert's commitment to recognising the plight of new migrants and their extraordinary contributions to Western Australia lives on with the Emigrant Monument at Ozone Reserve.

Mr Speaker, you may recall one evening at Council House back in 2006, when Albert and his fellow Ambruzzese committee members, proudly presented to us a model of the Emigrant Monument they sought permission to build. He spoke of a monument that would stand tall, as a reminder to all Western Australians of their maiden journey to this great land! From that day forth, Albert committed to the completion of this monument and went on to design a pavilion for the grounds surrounding the monument. A man of great foresight, he formed the Multicultural Association of WA, encouraging communal involvement and ownership of this project.

To the Di Lallo family, wife, Jan, and children, Simon, Luisa, Adrian and Lucia, I offer my dearest condolences and thank you for your friendship and support over the years. Simon and Luisa, I thank you for being here tonight.

Many people supported my campaign and I hope members will indulge me as I make some further acknowledgements. I particularly thank all my polling booth captains for adding a touch of razzmatazz and keeping up the morale throughout the day. To all my election day volunteers, and to Gemma Whiting and the Young Liberals, it was a long day, yet your enthusiasm never waned. Special thanks to Tom and Helen Galopoulos for ensuring our volunteers were well fed

and did not go thirsty. To the Liberal Party state director, Ben Morton, Cam Sinclair, Jocelen Griffiths at Menzies House, Jeremy Buxton, Bevan Marwick, Sean Morrison, Victoria Jackson, Lee Lipari, Natasha Tang, Peter and Jeremy Quinn, Frank Tringas, Archie Duda, Robbie Merritt, Jim Missikas, Neil Harper, Andrew Whitehead and Elizabeth Borrello—thank you all!

My sincere thanks to Perth division members of the Liberal Party, who I have not mentioned by name, and also to the Liberal Women’s Council, Curtin division and the 500 Club.

To my mother Julia Parissis; brother, Andrew Parissis; and sister, Betty Parissis-Tringas and their families, how can I thank you enough?

To my amazing, beautiful family—my husband, Bill, and children, Andria, Christos and Juliet, I am so proud of you all! Your love, support and encouragement are what inspire me, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I would like to thank my electorate for the honour it has bestowed upon me. I am humbled to be representing this capital city electorate of Perth, an electorate to which I have such strong community, professional and family ties—an electorate I adore!

I am looking forward to the next four years, and I give my commitment to work with enthusiasm and passion for my constituency, for all of my community, for my city and for my state. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

[Applause.]
